

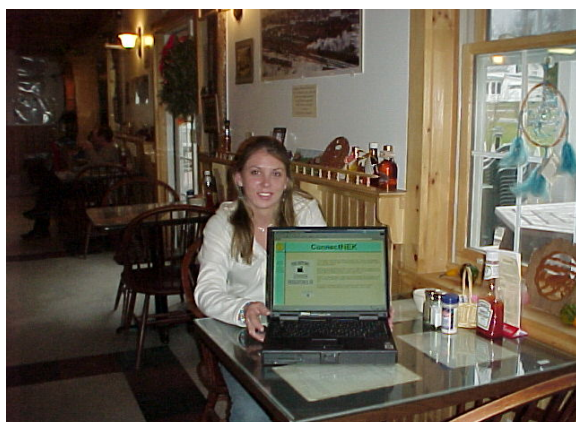
There are many different types of assistance that can be provided through the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) Program.

In 2005, we provided \$12,000 in grant funds to *Addison County Economic Development Corporation* to assist Middlebury manufacturers to develop a “brand” and a marketing cooperative to generate consumer sales at their locations. The *VT Women’s Business Center*, a program of Central VT Community Action Council, received \$34,455 toward a total project cost of \$43,441 that provided training to 18 NEK small business owners with a six week workshop on “how to develop an art based business”. Here is a sample of the “wearable art” jacket created by Tara Lynn.



In addition, *Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC)* received \$200,000 towards establishing a \$400,000 revolving loan fund for the creative economy (artists/crafters) to borrow money to start-up or expand their small Northeast Kingdom businesses. The *Nulhegan Gateway Association* received \$99,000 toward a project cost of \$114,000 to create a comprehensive multi-sector Geotourism Marketing Program and MapGuide to

promote local businesses to travelers in the Northeast Kingdom. This will help market those special places, businesses and crafters (including “green certified” wood products manufacturers) who demonstrate their creative processes. Over 100 businesses will be involved in this marketing effort. The *VT Council on Rural Development* received funds of \$37,490 toward a project cost of \$51,990 to develop the NEK WiFi Internet Access Hot Spots at a minimum of 10 local businesses who employ 116 employees. The first two were at Lyndon Freighthouse Restaurant (featured here) in Lyndonville and Angie’s Haven Bed & Breakfast in Brownington.



The *Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies (VCET)* received a \$99,900 grant to provide intensive one-on-one business development and marketing assistance to Vermont businesses developing agricultural and renewable energy technologies. VCET is a technologies business incubator located on the former Trinity College campus in Burlington, VT. Also related to agriculture, the *VT Farms Association* received \$6,000 to train their farmer members on how to maintain their pages of the Vermont Agritourism Website (retaining 79 jobs) and the *State of Vermont, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets* received \$26,300 to provide the twelve Deep Root Organic Truck Farmers Cooperative members with technical assistance to investigate value-added produce opportunities.

Other examples of technical assistance include: a feasibility study for a downtown grocery store; provide assistance in transition from a private business to a worker owned cooperative business structure; purchase equipment owned by the non-profit and utilized to benefit small businesses. The RBEG projects have developed toolkits to promote local buying practices, training manuals and curriculum to prepare businesses to have tours and visitors at their work-sites.

Success Stories from prior years:

In 2002, the *Poultney Downtown Revitalization Committee* developed a strategic plan for Poultney. The committee identified a need to provide technical assistance and education for a proposed Slate Discovery Center. RBEG funds of \$29,000 were received in 2004 for marketing the diverse uses for slate materials, training architects on new slate uses to increase sales, and to develop training for owners/workers on new slate installation techniques. There were 22 architects at the October 2004 training session. There are 25 companies in the Slate Valley who are assisted by the Slate Discovery Center program either directly or indirectly. These 25 businesses employ approximately 560 people. For more information on this program, check out their website at: www.slatediscoverycenter.org/

The *Vermont Wood Manufacturers' Association (VWMA)* received a \$39,000 RBEG for technical assistance to design and develop the Northern Forest Heritage Trail in the Champlain Valley featuring 10 wood products businesses in Bennington, Addison, and Chittenden counties. In another project, a \$27,854 RBEG to VWMA developed and provided the self-assessment tools and trained the owners and managers to prepare them to have tours and visitors at their worksites. These 12 member businesses



employ well over 227 workers. VWMA received additional \$19,000 of funding to take this model and expand it to provide statewide training and a Northern Forest Heritage Trail Map that includes the entire state of Vermont. Expanding this project to statewide will allow smaller, less experienced manufacturers to piggy back on previous successes with the Champlain Valley Heritage Trail. There are 16 businesses signed up for the statewide trail map with several driving loops. This will reduce marketing costs for all participating businesses. View the website for trail maps at: <http://www.vermontwood.com/>

The *Vermont Business Education Corporation (VBEC)* received \$76,500 for a two-year financial education program. This mentoring program will assist 50 small businesses to convert to a computerized bookkeeping system. The first year of the program 22 businesses were trained. Their second year they will target 28 businesses. This will affect 52 employees and hopes to create a minimum of 26 new jobs by the end of the program.

The *Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets* received \$18,289 toward a project cost of \$30,139 to provide an advanced training program for in-depth one-on-one support to successful large dairy farmers. There were 22 farms participating and resulted in saving 141 jobs. Training topics included human resource management, financial and business management. Yankee Farm Credit funded the second year of this successful program that targeted large established dairy farms, some well over 200 head. This is a group that is an important economic factor in Vermont Agriculture and the working landscape.